ECCLESIASTES

THE MEANING OF LIFE

THE NAME: “ECCLESIASTES”

- Ecclesiastes means “A Speaker before an Assembly”
- Key Word is “Vanity” - used 37 times
- “Under the Sun” - used 29 times
- This book is about finding MEANING, SATISFACTION and PURPOSE for life on this earth
- The fourth book of poetry in the Bible. While Psalms is a collection of songs and Proverbs is a collection of principles, Ecclesiastes is mostly long-form poetic discourse: it poses one main question at the beginning and spends the next twelve chapters arriving at an answer.
- The question: What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun?
- This book tries to find answers by showing us life seen from 2 Perspectives:
- **Perspective 1:** “Under the Sun” - ***Eccl 1:9*** *- “That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done, And there is nothing new under the sun.”*
- **Perspective 2:** “From above the Sun” - ***Eccl 2:24 - “****Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God.”*

- **Chapters: 12**
- **Verses: 222**

THE AUTHORSHIP

Why is this book traditionally attributed to Solomon?

- He is a son of David (Ec 1:1).
- He is a king (Ec 1:1).
- He ruled all of Israel in Jerusalem (Ec 1:12).
- He was a wise man of great renown (Ec 12:9–10).

A TOUGH BOOK TO UNDERSTAND

- It was written by the wisest man in known history (outside of Christ).
- It deals with some of the most difficult subjects in our lives.
- It is written in a form uncommon to us (circular instead of linear).

THE STATE OF LIFE ON EARTH

The sun rises, sets, and rises again. Rivers flow, but never empty. Information multiplies, but the mind is never satisfied. So in the never-ending cycles of life, what can man do? It sure looks meaningless. And the more the Preacher learns about the world, the more depressing a world it becomes (Eccl 1:18). So he explores this problem. The first portion of Ecclesiastes explore man's situation on earth (Eccl 1:13). And the situation isn't too great:

- The smarter you get, the harder it is to cope with the world (Eccl 1:18).
- Pleasure and riches do not satisfy (Eccl 2:10–11; Eccl 5:10;).
- Wise men and fools die alike (Eccl 2:16).
- You can't take the results of your hard work with you when you die (Eccl 2:18–19; 5:13–17).
- What you leave behind goes to a generation who didn't earn it (Eccl 2:18–19).
- And the results of your labor don't really satisfy your desires, either (Eccl 2:10–11; 5:10; 6:7).
- People practice evil instead of justice (Eccl 3:16; 4:1; 5:8).
- Even obedience to God doesn't guarantee a long, happy life (Eccl 7:16).
- And the wicked sometimes get away with it (Eccl 7:15; 8:14).

WAYS TO HANDLE LIFE

- Why is the world this way? What can we do about it? What's the point?
- He's sure that there's a just God (Eccl 8:12–13)
- But the world doesn't always reflect God's justice

So the Preacher explains what man can do to enjoy life:

- Eat, drink, and enjoy life, because you're in the hand of God (Eccl 9:7–9).
- Work hard, and use wisdom while you can (Eccl 9:10, 18).
- Avoid acts of foolishness—especially when dealing with authority (Eccl 10:2, 5–6, 20).
- Take chances, pursue opportunities, and enjoy life while you can (Eccl 11:4, 8–10).
- As you live, remember who made you (Eccl 12:1).

SUMMING UP!

- And then the Preacher sums everything up:
- In the end, the Preacher comes to accept that faith in God is the only way to find personal meaning.
- He decides to accept the fact that life is brief and ultimately worthless without God.
- The Preacher advises the reader to focus on an eternal God instead of temporary pleasure.

Eccl 12:13-14

13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man’s all.
14 For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, whether good or evil.

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

Duane Garrett's Commentary

1. Introduction (1:1-2)
2. On time and the World (1:3-11)
3. On Wisdom (1:12-18)
4. On Wealth (2:1-11)
5. On Wisdom (2:12-17)
6. On Wealth (2:18-26)
7. On Time and the World (3:1-15b)
8. On Politics (3:15c-17)
9. On Death (3:18-22)
10. On Politics (4:1-3)
11. On Wealth (4:4-8)
12. On Friendship (4:9-12)
13. On Politics (4:13-16)
14. On Religion (5:1-7)
15. On Politics (5:8-9)
16. On Wealth (5:10-6:6)
17. Transition (6:7-9)
18. On Wisdom and Death (6:10-7:4)
19. Transition (7:5-6)
20. On Wisdom and Politics (7:7-9)
21. Transition (7:10)
22. On Wisdom and Wealth (7:11-14)
23. On Wisdom and Religion (7:15-29)
24. Transition (8:1)
25. On Politics (8:2-6)
26. Transition (8:7-8)
27. On Theodicy (8:9-9:1)
28. Transition (9:2)
29. On Death and Contentment (9:3-10)
30. Transition (9:11-12)
31. On Politics (9:13-10:17)
32. Transition (10:18-20)
33. On Wealth (11:1-6)
34. On Death and Contentment (11:7-12:7)
35. Conclusion (12:8-14)